

Module 6: Initial, Ongoing and Exit Assessment

Introduction:

As a new practitioner, you will need to know about assessments. After you work as a practitioner for a while, you will learn how to do assessments with your learners. Every agency has its own way of assessing. Watch and learn from your program manager and co-workers to see how they do it. Here we will explain a general outline of assessments.

Informal Assessment:

You will assess your learners from the day they come into your program until the day they leave. You will watch your learners as they do tasks; see how they work with other people; and notice when they struggle. This is an “informal assessment.” You cannot test the learners on these issues, but you can find out much just by watching.

Formal Assessment:

Formal assessments are more organized. The practitioner uses activities, tests and demonstrations to assess the learner then writes down the results. Be sure to tell your learner why you are giving them each task and how they relate to their goals.

Three Kinds of Formal Assessments:

1. **Initial Assessment** – when the learner first enters the program
2. **Ongoing Assessment** – at regular times while the learner is in your program, usually every 3 to 6 months
3. **Exit Assessment** – when the learner is leaving the program

MTCU – Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Literacy programs in Ontario follow a learning outcomes approach. That is, finding the learner's goals and helping them in reaching those goals.

Learning materials and activities will match:

- learner's skill levels (from assessments)
- learner's goals
- expected learning outcomes

Literacy programs must follow the Proper Guidelines:

For example, in Ontario, literacy programs must follow LBS Guidelines as shown here:

- Make sure the person is eligible for LBS service:
 - they don't have enough literacy skills to work or live
 - they are out of school
 - they are able to learn and progress.
- Assist new learners:
 - identify their short and long-term goals
 - identify their learning styles
 - identify the literacy and basic skills they already have
- Use proper assessment tools the learner can understand, and that help them with their training plans and goals.
- Make sure the staff doing the assessments have the proper skills.
- Assess learner's progress and achievements during their training.
- Use LBS levels in all assessments to describe the learners' literacy skills.
- Keep learner files up-to-date.
- Make sure other LBS agencies can understand the assessment results.

Creating Assessments:

Anglophone literacy programs use many standard assessments with their learners. But right now, there are no standard assessments for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind stream. The assessments used by hearing literacy programs usually do not work well in Deaf and Deaf-Blind programs. This is because for most ASL users, English is their 2nd or 3rd language. Agencies in the Deaf and Deaf-Blind stream usually create their own specialized assessments.

Intake:

Many people may come to your literacy program, but not all will become learners. Some people come and ask about what services you have. During the intake interview, the staff member and the individual talk about what the person wants and what their goals are (See **Module 3** on Goal Setting). You may find your program does not suit their needs or that they are not eligible to join your program. Sometimes you will need to refer that person to another agency.

Because you will make these referrals, it is important to know what other agencies and services are available in your area. It can be hard to turn a person away because there are so few services accessible to Deaf and Deaf/Blind individuals. It is normal to feel you want to do more for the person, but it is important not to over-involve yourself in these situations. It is better to focus on the learners you can serve.

The Intake Process: (from Literacy Basics)

Points to think about during intake –

- Is your program the right choice for this person? Look at their current skills, goals and commitment to learning.

- Is this person eligible to join your program? Check the criteria; your literacy services plan (LSP); other stakeholder requirements.
- Do you have all the information you need to develop a training plan?
- Do you need more time to focus on short and long-term goals?
- Does your program offer the services and structure this person needs?

Tips for the Intake Interview:

- Work with the person in a comfortable room that is private so there will be no interruptions.
- Don't jump into the process. Take time to help the person relax. Maybe chat or offer them a coffee or cold drink.
- Explain what will happen so the person will know what to expect:
 - how long the interview will take
 - what you can and can't help them with
 - what they must do themselves
 - what the next steps will be
- Start the fact-finding interview (name, address, and so on). The skills assessment may be done after the interview or on another day. It can be helpful to use standard intake or interview forms.
- Use information from the intake interview to help you decide which assessment material to use. For example, if the learner told you their goal is independence, you may use an assessment task that includes food shopping. You may also get some clue about their skills level during the intake interview. Some programs use a "quick screen" tool to get an idea of the person's skill level. This helps you choose the right assessment tools.

Your intake form should include this information:

- Personal information (name, phone number, address, e-mail)
- Source of income (how they support themselves)
- Languages:
 - what language was used when growing up and now
 - what language is used at home
 - what language is used with friends
- Communication methods used: ASL, tactile communication, signing, gestures, lip-reading and speaking, writing, other
- Learning style and preferences (Note: Some agencies include a learning styles test in the initial assessment. Other agencies wait until the learner is enrolled.)
- Literacy level now
- Learning goals and learner outcomes to be successful in those goals
- Past education and training (year finished school, grade level, feelings about school)
- Work history (past jobs, skills, knowledge, feelings about work)
- Transferable skills (skills from one situation that can be used in other situations, i.e.: time management, problem solving)
- Vision or hearing considerations
- Health issues that may affect learning (bad back so can't sit for too long, strong medicine that may cause sleepiness)
- Transportation (Will they need support to pay for bus?)
- Learner preferences: schedule, location, learning environment

- Other supports needed (day care)
- Volunteer work done
- Other interests, hobbies

Initial Assessments:

Be sure you have completed the Intake Process before you begin the Initial Assessment. Watch for clues about skills levels as the learner responds to your questions, reads and writes, and interacts with you (Informal Assessment).

In **Module 3: Goal setting and the Deaf and Deaf-Blind Adult Literacy Learner**, we talked about finding the **learner's goals** – what they want to do when they have completed their training, and the **learner's outcomes** - what they need to learn to achieve their goals. How you assess a learner depends on these goals and needs.

Your agency has its own assessments materials ready for use. You will need to choose the parts of the assessment that match your learner's goals. Initial Assessments are used to find the learner's skill level. They are also used to help develop the learner's training plan. Initial and ongoing assessments are kept for measuring learner progress.

By the end of the initial assessment review, the learner should understand more clearly:

- their goals
- what skills, knowledge and abilities they have
- what they need to do and learn to reach their goals

Training Plan:

After the initial assessment, the practitioner and the learner will create a training plan. The training plan will include the learner's goals, the skills they have now, and what they need to learn to meet their goals.

The training plan should be flexible as the learner may want to add or make changes to their plan. You should plan to meet with your learner regularly (every 3-6 months) to review and update the training plan.

You can find more information about making training plans in **Module 3: Goal Setting and the Deaf and Deaf-Blind Adult Literacy Learner**.

Ongoing and Exit Assessments:

Ongoing assessment can be either formal or informal. The purpose of the assessment is for the learner and the practitioner to see any progress made and to review the training plan.

Informal assessment can be as simple as asking the learner how they are doing or doing a quick review of a learner's work. This will give the learner and the practitioner a chance to see any progress or any areas where the learner is struggling.

Formal assessments are more organized and include activities, tests and demonstrations. With any assessment activity, it is important to include the learner. Explain the purpose of the activity and how it relates to their goals.

It is important to document the learner's progress. Your agency may use a checklist of skills for this purpose. You may want to write short reports about any progress or problems you have observed. You could also use a self-assessment tool, completed by the learner.

Examples of different kinds of Ongoing and Exit Assessments:

- **Demonstrations:**

The learner will show their new skills by doing an activity that includes those skills. These activities should be as authentic as possible. That is, the demonstration must be like tasks they would do in real life. The activity should assess two or more skills and relate to the learner's goals. Demonstrations are similar to learning activities with two important differences:

1. Demonstrations must test the learner's new skills.
2. Demonstrations must show that the learner can transfer their new skills to new tasks.

- **Tips for Demonstrations:**

- Have learners do demonstration **only** when they are comfortable and confident with their new skills.
- Explain clearly what you want learners to do before they begin.
- When learners are successful with demonstrations, they will want to learn more.

- **Portfolios:**

A portfolio is a collection of the learner's work. The learner may want to put samples of their work into a binder or box. Choose the samples carefully. Make sure they show the skills learned while in the program.

Work with the learner when putting together a portfolio. You will see the level of progress in the learner's skills. Make sure the learner also sees the progress they are making.